



Individualistic Goal Structure and Academic Performance in a Depressed Economy: A Study of Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author AUOA designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author OCA managed the analyses of the study and managed the literature searches. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined individualistic goal structure as an appropriate technique for improved academic performance of students in Social Studies in a depressed economy. The study used one hundred and twenty (120) students (sixty males and sixty females), drawn from two Colleges of Education in South-East Nigeria. The instrument used for the study was the Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT). Section A of the SSAT contained the bio-data of the respondents while section B consisted of 20 multiple-choice items. The research questions were answered using mean rating and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). The null hypotheses tested were rejected implying that there was a significant difference between individualistic goal structure and the academic performance of students in Social Studies, also that there was a significant relationship between gender and the academic achievement of students in Social Studies. The paper, therefore, recommends the

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retraining of teachers towards using of individualistic goal structure to improve students' performance in Social Studies. Also, that both male and females should be assisted and encouraged by parents, teachers and the society to develop their untapped intellectual resources, so as to improve academically.

Keywords: Individualistic goal structure; gender; academic performance; social studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic performance of students at all levels is not only a pointer to the effectiveness or otherwise of schools but a major determinant of the future of youths in particular and the nation in general. The quintessential achievement oriented domain for education in a depressed economy, particularly for the college of education students, includes high performance on tests, passing courses and completing degrees [1].

Social Studies is one of the courses studied in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Udoh and Mansaray in [2] point out that "the course is a discipline that can be used in solving problems of relationship and interaction in man's dynamic environment". The importance of Social Studies in the Nigerian Educational System cannot be overemphasized. The objectives of Social Studies education which is in line with the philosophy and aims of Nigerian Education are hinged on the development of high competencies required for solving man's diverse environmental problems for better and effective social living. Specifically, the focus of Social Studies is to extricate the Nigerian child from the apron strings of colonial education which merely propagated foreign values and therefore, acquaint him with his own cultural values and traditions. The teaching of Social Studies is directed towards building a virile Nigeria Nation, irrespective of ethnic diversity. It is also directed towards promoting citizenship and value education in addition to skills development [3].

When students are given individual goals and rewarded individually according to a 'criterion-referenced' evaluation system, the goal structure is individualistic, [4]. Here, learners perceive themselves as working for their own rewards. In this environment, students need not be concerned about what anyone else is accomplishing. Their goal is to meet the standards which they or the teacher have established.

Trow in [5] defined academic achievement as "knowledge attaining ability or degree of

competence in school tasks usually measured by standardized tests and expressed in a grade or units based on pupils' performance". Good in [6] refers to academic achievement as, "The knowledge obtained or skills developed in the school subjects usually designed by test scores or marks assigned by the teacher".

The achievement of students in Social Studies is to a large extent based on the levels of understanding and commitment of such students in a classroom atmosphere which is able to motivate them to learn. For students to achieve, the methodologies which can help them master the subject content should be utilized in teaching. The manner of Social Studies lecture presentation should be activity based not the regular lecture method which does not take cognizance of student's individual learning styles. In lecture method, the teacher simply becomes the expositor and drill master while the learner remains the listener and a storehouse of facts that can be retrieved when a student hears his name called by the teacher.

According to [7], when students are given individual goals and rewarded individually according to a 'criterion-referenced' evaluation system, the goal structure is individualistic. Here, learners perceive themselves as working for their own rewards. In this environment, students need not be concerned about what anyone else is accomplishing. Their goal is to meet the standards which they or the teacher have established. Goal structures are generally viewed as precursors of student's personal goal orientations, which are thought to have a more proximal influence on motivation and achievement patterns [8].

One of the most topical issues in the current debate all over the world has been that of gender differences and academic achievement among students in schools. Over the years, there has been a growing awareness of the role of women at home, in schools, and communities. However, worries have equally been expressed about the roles of women in the political, social, cultural,

psychological, economic, spiritual, science and technology and also in education [9]. [10] lamented that schools and the nation at large are making profound contributions to the creation of positive learning environment that could motivate learning achievement more in boys than girls.

This paper seeks to discover if improvement in classroom practices and individualistic learning could improve the performance of students in social studies and also discover if gender difference would have an impact on the academic achievement of students, especially in social studies.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. What is the impact of individualistic goal structure on the academic achievement of students in Social Studies?
2. What is the impact of gender difference on the academic achievement of students in Social Studies?

3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and will be tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- H_{01} : There is no significant difference between the mean scores of subjects in individualistic classroom goal structure group and those in the control group.
- H_{02} : There is no significant interactive effect between Gender Difference and treatment on the academic achievement of students in Social Studies.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study Adopted a quasi-experimental (pre-test, post-test and control group) design. The population of this study comprised of all Social Studies students in the colleges of Education in South East Nigeria which are 6,250 in number. The sample consisted of one hundred and twenty (120) year one students drawn from the Department of Social Studies in Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri and Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe.

4.1 Instrument

Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) designed by the researcher was used as the instrument for the study. The instrument consisted of 20 multiple choice items used as pre-test and post-test. The Face, content, construct validity of the instrument was ascertained by the experts in Measurement and Evaluation and Social Studies, The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-re-test method and the scores were compared using the raw score method of the Pearson product moment correlation and a reliability coefficient of 0.73 was realized which signifies very high and positive reliability.

4.2 Experimental Procedure

The researcher made use of intact classes in the selected schools. Purposive sampling was used to select the schools, while random sampling was used to allocate the schools to control and experimental groups. The two schools were assigned to treatment and control groups through the toss of a coin. Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri was represented by the side of the coin that has the image of a person, (Treatment Group) while the side that has the Nigerian coat of arm stood for Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe. (Control Group). Then students were exposed to pre-test to check their knowledge baseline. For the treatment group, learning at individual pace was encouraged. The researcher and the research assistants (two social studies lecturers) led students to learn on their own, students were given task and allowed to research within a given period of time. Individual achievements were recognized and positive reinforcements were used as a reward. The researcher and the research assistants worked together to encourage and help each student learn. The Concentration was on each individual's ability. The control group, on the other hand, was taught using Lecture method. At the end of the treatment, SSAT was re-administered and the result, analyzed to ascertain the effect of the treatment.

4.3 Data Analysis

The research questions were answered using Mean rating and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA).

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. What is the impact of individualistic goal structure on the academic achievement of students in social studies?

Instructional approach	Mean	Std. deviation	N
IGS	12.7	2.41	60
LM	9.7	3.40	60
Total	11.2	3.25	120
Gain score	7.1		

From Table 1, it can be seen that there is a percentage increase in favour of students

Treated with IGS relative to their counterparts that were not exposed to LM.

Table 2. What is the impact of gender on the academic achievement of students in social studies?

Variables	Number	IGS	Mean total
Male	60	14.2	14.2
Female	60	15.6	15.6

From Table 2, Females had a mean score of 15.6 while male had 14.2.

Table 3. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of subjects in individualistic classroom goal structure group and those in the control group

Source	Type 111 sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta squared
Corrected model	109.305 ^a	2	54.652	10.110	.001	.543
Intercept	221.846	1	221.846	41.040	.000	.707
Pre_Test	64.305	1	64.305	11.896	.003	.412
Group	54.430	1	54.430	10.069	.006	.372
Error	91.895	117	5.406			
Total	2710.000	120				
Corrected total	201.200	119				

ANCOVA Summary of the mean difference between the Treatment Group and the Control group. Significance at 0.05; df = 1 & 17, F-cal = 10.069; F-critical = 5.85

The hypothesis results show a significant difference between the treatment group and the control group. This result reveals that students in the individualistic goal structure group benefitted from the teaching and learning method adopted.

This result is in line with the findings of [11] on achievement in Cooperative versus Individualistic Goal Structured Junior Secondary School Mathematics Classroom in Nigeria. Result of the research revealed that individualized group scored higher in mathematics achievement test given.

Table 4. There is no significant interactive effect between gender difference and the academic achievement of students in social studies

Source	Type 111 sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta squared
Corrected model	30.796 ^a	2	15.398	14.419	.000	.629
Intercept	22.394	1	22.394	20.970	.000	.552
Male	8.746	1	8.746	8.190	.011	.325
Female	18.663	1	18.663	17.477	.001	.507
Error	18.154	117	1.068			
Total	3403.000	120				
Corrected total	48.950	119				

ANCOVA summary table of the interactive effect between gender difference and the academic achievement of students in social studies. Significance at p < 0.05; df = 1 & 17, F-cal = 17.477; F-critical = 6.40

The result of the study revealed that female students were better receptors of the treatment package than male students. The result means that female students adjusted more to the treatment packages than boys by obtaining higher achievement mean scores.

This result is against the findings of [12] on cooperative learning in English language achievement amongst senior secondary school students in Delta State, which revealed that there was no significant interaction effect between gender and experimental groups.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, for there to be an improvement in student's academic achievement in social studies, the adoption of individualistic goal structure is needed as it will emphasize on the improvement of learning skills, provide the motivational support needed to comprehend the complex structure of the subject is needed. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Both male and female students should be assisted and encouraged by their parents, teachers and the society to develop their untapped intellectual resources, so as to improve academically.
2. Teachers should strive to change the traditional method of instruction and avail themselves of the opportunity to learn new techniques of teaching.
3. Government should sponsor teachers for workshops and training towards using Individualistic Goal Structure to improve students' performance in Social Studies.
4. Seminars, workshops, and conferences should be organized regularly on improved methods of teaching like Individualistic Goal Structure so as to enhance the academic achievement of students.
5. The school authority should enforce and monitor the implementation of improved learning strategies like Individualistic Goal Structure in the classroom.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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